



DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE **FACT SHEET**

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FS-49-Crime (Revised)

May 15, 2000

Democrats Continue to Fight for Effective, Common-Sense Gun Safety Legislation

In 1993 and 1994, Democrats passed effective, common-sense gun safety legislation in the face of fierce resistance from the gun lobby. This legislation has helped to reduce gun crimes by more than 35 percent since 1993; prevent more than 500,000 prohibited purchasers from buying guns; and bring crime to its lowest level in 25 years.

Despite the substantial gains made as a result of this legislation, time and time again — from Columbine to Buell Elementary School — we are reminded that it is far too easy for guns to fall into the hands of criminals and children.

- In 1997, the latest year for which data is available, 32,436 people died from gunshots in America. (National Center for Health Statistics)
- Thirty-one percent of children ages 12 to 17 know someone who carries a gun. (Yankelovich Partners, *Time Magazine*, May 3, 1999)
- An average of almost 12 children die every day from gunfire. (National Center for Health Statistics)
- The gun homicide rate for children under 15 is 16 times higher in the U.S. than in 25 other industrialized nations. (Department of Justice, *Kids and Violence*, 2000)
- During the 1996-1997 school year, 5,724 students were expelled for bringing guns or explosives to school. (Department of Education, 1999)

Democratic Policy Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-7050

Byron Dorgan, Chairman

Senate Democrats passed effective, common-sense gun safety legislation. Senate Democrats responded to this critical need and fought successfully to pass a number of gun safety provisions in the Senate version of the juvenile justice legislation, **S. 254**, the *Violent and Repeat Juvenile Offender Accountability and Rehabilitation Act*. This legislation would:

- close the gun show loophole which currently permits sales at gun shows without a background check;
- prohibit the sale or transfer by a licensed dealer of a handgun without a secure gun storage or safety device;
- close the loophole in the law that permits the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips;
- keep guns out of the hands of serious juvenile offenders by banning gun sales to juveniles with violent crime records;
- expand the Youth Crime Gun Interdiction Initiative to 250 cities by 2003 to enhance efforts to trace guns used in crimes, and identify and arrest adults who sell guns to children;
- require the Federal Trade Commission and the Attorney General to study the extent to which the gun industry markets and distributes its products to juveniles;
- increase penalties on “straw purchases” to curb the transfer of firearms to individuals who cannot purchase them legally — juveniles, felons, fugitives and stalkers; and
- ban juvenile possession of semi-automatic assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition clips.

Republicans continue to block this common-sense gun safety legislation by refusing to convene the conference committee on the Juvenile Justice bill. It has been more than eleven months since the Senate passed **S. 254**. Since that time, both the Senate and the House of Representatives have passed resolutions urging the conferees to meet; Senator **Leahy** and Representative Conyers have written to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees — on multiple occasions — requesting that the conference committee convene; and a major gun manufacturer has agreed to important measures to reduce gun violence in America.

Nevertheless, the Republican leadership has not convened a single substantive meeting of the conference committee, delaying consideration of this critical legislation.